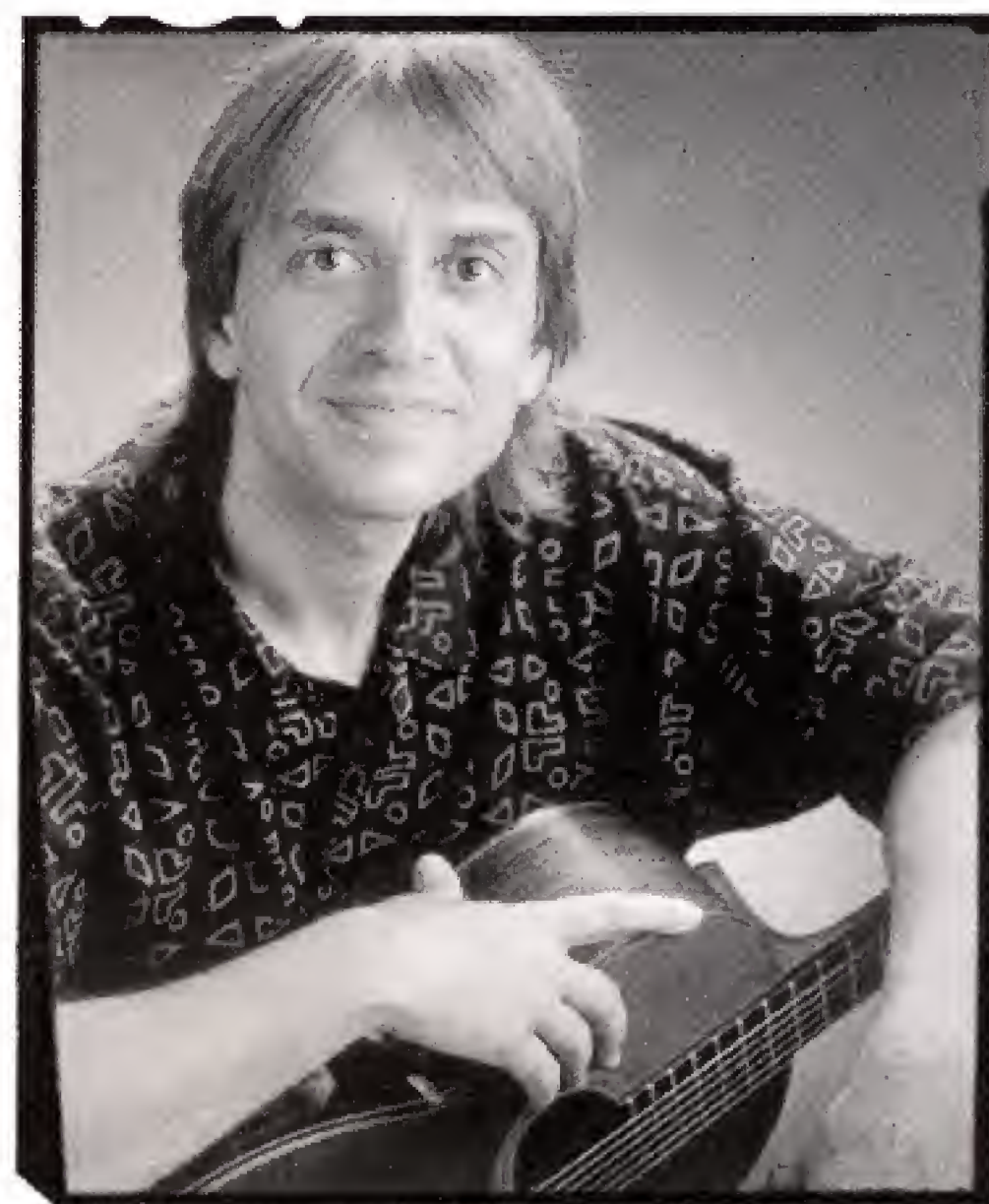


Morphing an African Lullaby

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Ex. 1 zum gwa - be gwa - be gwa - be zum gwa - be gwa - be

Ex. 2

Ex. 3

EVER WONDER WHAT TO DO

with a melody that keeps running through your head? Taught to me by a close friend, this Zulu lullaby buzzed in my ear for a long time until the other day, when I thought of using it as a basis for a guitar piece. Rather than hanging it on a straight-ahead jazz or rock framework, I used several African melodic and rhythmic techniques typical for instruments like kora (a 21-string harp) and any of the African thumb pianos known variously as ngombi, mbira and kalimba.

After you check out the lullaby (Ex. 1), try the simple 6/8 ngombi harp pattern in Ex. 2. Ex. 3 introduces syncopation to the eighth-note movement. In Ex. 4, the 6/8 meter mutates to 12/16. The melody is now completely syncopated, while the bass plays dotted eighths in double-time.

Ex. 5 features a fluid sixteenth-note kora harp pattern, while Ex. 6 contrasts the lullaby bass melody with the upper line's arpeggiated chords.

Remember these plucking patterns next time an insistent little tune keeps you awake till three in the morning. ■

Ex. 4

12/16

T
A
B

Ex. 5

6/8

T
A
B

Ex. 6

6/8

T
A
B

Cmaj9 D6/9